

When Things Fall Apart

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Summary: When the dead rise and attack the living, it's up to a group of gifted teenagers from various small towns to rebuild everything they've lost. Unfortunately they aren't the only ones who managed to survive the collapse of society. There are those who seek to rebuild the world in their image and to them, it's follow them or die...

When Things Fall Apart

Act One: Amid the Ruins

Chapter One: Troubled Times

_Etiam quã| sibi quisque timebat
>Unius in miseri exitium conversa tulere._

Translated as:

_What each man feared would happen to himself, did not trouble him
when he saw that it would ruin another._

-Virgil

* * *

><p>I'm going to die thought Astrid Hofferson as she slowly limped down the desolate winding road.

Even from a young age, Astrid already knew well of the concept of life and death. Her parents were taken from her in a car crash involving a drunk driver when she was only four and she was sent to live with her uncle per her grandparent's wishes. Her grandparents from both sides passed away before she became eight. Most of her relatives living overseas or across the country passed away just short of her thirteenth birthday. Since then, Astrid knew it was only

a matter of time before she was going to die, but she had always imagined that she would go out surrounded by the special people in her life, just like her grandparents.

She never imagined that she would go out like this.

Alone in the middle of nowhere.

On the bright side, she would probably bleed out long before the walkers got anywhere near her_. _Despite all the pain she was in, she would rather die from exhaustion than be ripped apart by the soulless monsters roaming the world.

Every fiber of her being was in agony and it took every ounce of her willpower just to keep moving. All the endurance training she did for the track team and the regional marathon had finally paid off. If only her training taught her to ignore the pain better. All she could do was push it to the side and force her body onwards.

Everything hurt. Icy daggers stabbed her right side with every breath she took. Jackhammers relentlessly pounded away at her left ankle. Red hot spikes of pain were drilling into the back of her head. Her skin stung and her parched throat felt like sandpaper. The nerves in her left shoulder burned, causing her arm to dangle uselessly by her side. Her ears rang with an alarming intensity and her eyes were playing tricks on her, everything fading in and out of focus. To make matters worse, her damp clothes latched itself onto her skin, making her feel like she was burning alive and freezing to death at the same time. Left, right, up, down, they all blurred together. If she didn't change out of these clothes and get warm soon, she was going to catch something and her current state dwindled her already remote chances of possible recovery.

Astrid narrowed her eyes, looking around for anything out of the ordinary. With her out of tune senses, she needed to be extra careful. One misstep or wandering in the wrong direction could result in death. In the last six months, Astrid had the misfortune of stumbling upon the victims of carelessness. A family who took their car cross-country without bringing enough fuel or replacement parts, resulting in a breakdown miles away from the nearest shelter or source of food and water. A couple who made the unfortunate decision to cook some wild mushrooms without the proper training. A diabetic man who took the wrong road and ran out of insulin before he could find some more. A woman with epilepsy who took too much expired medicine in a short amount of time.

Unfortunately, everything looked alien to her. This wasn't her neck of the woods, literally. She was in unfamiliar territory without a map or a clue about where she was. Astrid's Uncle Finn had taken her camping, hiking, jogging, and hunting in the woods around Berk nearly all her life. He had taught her many survival tricks and skills over the long summers they spent outdoors, but he stressed the importance of knowing the terrain ahead of time and if not, then taking note of everything she came across. She didn't know what animals lived here, what plants grew here, where the freshwater streams and rivers were located, or if there was anything resembling civilization in the area. How the hell could she tell the differences between a poisonous mushroom and an edible mushroom, let alone find shelter?

That wasn't even her biggest problem.

The big problem was the fact that Astrid had almost no supplies on her. Everything she needed to survive was in her knapsack and that was long gone, consumed by the roaring currents of the Shirebourn river. Whatever she had left was either useless or not enough to help her reach the safety of her friends. She had her Zippo lighter tucked in her back pocket, but it only had a third of lighter fluid left. She didn't know how long that would last, especially if she needed to light fires every night. Astrid's Colt Detective Special was no longer on her. Her coat pocket had somehow ripped during her struggle to break the surface of the river, causing her revolver to fall out. It didn't even matter. Even if she still had it, most of her spare ammo was still in her bag and she only kept a handful of rounds on her at any given time. Astrid's dented canteen was practically empty and the only food she had on her was a half-eaten bag of beef jerky that thankfully still dry. The KA-BAR USMC utility knife that Astrid had found in a corner of a looted military surplus store weeks ago was still sheathed on her belt, but she doubted it would be much use to her with an arm that refused to follow her orders. Tucked in her belt was a collapsible baton recovered from the reanimated body of a dead police officer. Her baton was one of those ASP batons that could crack or break bones if enough force was used, but it was designed for incapacitating human threats so unless she ran into walkers or bandits, it couldn't put food in her mouth like her knife. She also had a small pocket compass that somehow survived her plunge into the river, but without a proper map to give her a direction to follow, its function amounted to a paperweight.

It was better that she just stick to the road she was already following. Wandering around in the forest blind would only led to her death, if she didn't freeze first.

Move she mentally reminded herself, despite the warnings to the contrary her brain kept sending her. Just keep moving.

The sun had already started to set, staining the sky red, and a brisk wind whipped past her, sending chills slithering down her spine. It wouldn't be long before nightfall and at this time of year, the forest was especially cold. It was only a few weeks before winter after all. Soon it would start to snow, hopefully freezing those goddamned flesh-eaters in their tracks, but for now, Astrid had to deal with the low temperatures of the forest with her damp clothes.

She needed to build a fire and soon.

Hyperthermia and pneumonia were sure to kick in if she didn't get warm soon.

An eternity seemed to have passed before Astrid stumbled upon shelter. Her heart nearby burst out of her chest when she laid her strained eyes on the rundown diner. Astrid had never been so glad to see such a sorry sight, but as she neared the entrance, her hopes were shattered.

Walkers.

Of course. Even the shittiest looking building in the world has to have a few walkers lurking about. It can't just be abandoned, all ready for the taking. No. Got to clear it out first. Got have some

risk. Why can't I just catch a fucking break?_

Astrid ducked, keeping her head below the side of the abandoned Jeep Unlimited Rubicon sitting the small parking lot. The diner was one of those generic 1950's diners Astrid saw in old movies all the time. Huge, wide windows allowing a good view in and out of the diner with a counter running the length of the kitchen with swiveling stools bolted to the floor in front of it and cushioned benches with tables situated against the glass. Apparently the diner was one of those places that time seemed to have stopped. Everything about it screamed 1950's, from the style of the counter to the oversized jukebox in the corner to the style of the menu hanging above the counter.

From what Astrid could see, there were two walkers inside the diner. Both were in front of the counter. She didn't see any other bodies nor was there any telltale moaning coming from the diner aside from those two. She needed to double check to make sure there were no more walkers hiding, but that would have to wait until she got rid of these two first. One of them was a female waitress and was hanging around the decorated jukebox, but the grime on the window obstructed Astrid's view. The walker in the very front by the door was a heavyset man and wore some type of beige uniform and cowboy hat along with a bulky utility belt.

No, wait a second.

Astrid saw the telltale shape of a holster on the beige uniformed zombie. She narrowed her eyes and saw the familiar star of a sheriff's badge. That was a sheriff's uniform. That walker was a sheriff!

She let out a silent thanks to the man upstairs as she eyed the ex-sheriff, keeping track of his movements. It was the answer to most of Astrid's problems. The sheriff's gun was still on his belt, along with some spare ammunition as well as a short range radio.

That radio was going to save Astrid's life, provided she was within range.

A few weeks after the shit hit the fan, as Astrid and her friends bypassed a nasty pileup on the freeway, the Thorston Twins found a old CB radio inside a overturned semi while looking for some trucker moonshine. Freddie, who was a nervous wreck but easily the smartest person in their entire group although no one would admit it, fixed it up with duct tape and other random tools from a nearby hardware store and tried to contact a larger group or community for help or at the very least, some news. America was screwed no matter how you looked at it, with the government being non-existent, militia groups fighting each other over meaningless political ideals, survivalist groups taking over whatever communities were left, and bandits roaming every major transportation route left. The rest of the world, they hoped, might not be in such a bad shape. Before everything went to shit in the states, a good amount of countries had been able to withstand the undead hordes.

Months of broadcasting daily messages however had come up fruitless.

That was, until two days ago.

Two days ago, Astrid and her friends were approaching Cook County, which was supposed to be the last county they needed to go through before they could get back to their hometown of Berk, when they had set up camp for the night. Per usual, Freddie did his routine message asking for help or news, but was startled by a sudden burst of static carrying someone else's voice. Everyone, even the loudmouthed braggart Scott, went completely silent at the sound of someone else's voice. Freddie chattered with the mystery voice in radio lingo for five minutes or so, trying to figure out their relative positions or something along those lines.

The faint signal was eventually lost and Freddie told everyone that he had made contact with a community called Fusion Falls. The problem was that none of them had ever heard of it. Their county was known throughout the state for having diverse and colorful town names like Peach Creek, Lemon Brook, Berk, Burglar's Bog, Kadic, Beacon, Townsville, and Nowhere. Still, despite growing up among all those oddly named towns, Fusion Falls was a unknown place. The voice told them to head to Fusion Falls where some people will greet them, but none of their maps showed where Fusion Falls was. In hindsight, Astrid realized that the maps they had were of the neighboring counties they had to navigate through to get back home.

It was because of those maps that Astrid nearly ended up as a victim of the Shirebourn river. She had volunteered to find Fusion Falls and come back if they were to be trusted or not, but she barely got five miles before she was off the edge of the map. The map had the words "To Fusion Falls" printed in tiny script with an arrow pointing across the Shirebourn river, so Astrid decided to cross the river.

It was almost the last mistake Astrid ever made.

The river looked peaceful and shallow enough to wade across, but she was only able to take about two steps before dropping off an unseen ledge and being sucked up by the river's hidden currents. After she went under, everything became fuzzy, but all Astrid remembered a great weight and tension was lifted off her back when she came to surface. She didn't even realize her bag was gone until much later.

That didn't matter anymore. Since the sheriff had been inside of the diner along with the chef and who Astrid assumed was the waiter or waitress, it made sense that the diner was untouched and ripe with supplies. Surely most of the food would be spoiled but a considerable amount of dry, packaged, and canned food laid inside, calling her name.

Now, how was she going to do this?

Talk about being at a disadvantage. Astrid's head was throbbing, her ankle was sprained, her arm was numb, and she couldn't take deep breaths. She only had a knife and non-lethal baton for weapons and it wasn't going to be easy to use them with the way she was. She needed to even the odds, but how?

The cars.

There had to be something useful in one of them. There was only one other car in the lot aside from the Jeep, a police-issue Ford Crown

Victoria with the county sheriff's decal. Astrid grabbed the Jeep's door handle and silently pulled the handle, only to discover it was locked.

Typical.

Astrid glanced in the passenger side door window and was met with disappointment. The Jeep was practically empty. There were no open wrappers, crumbs, or trash on the floor, no sunglasses or bobble-heads on the dashboard, no cups, pencils, or pens in the cup holder, and nothing aside from basic registration papers in the open glove compartment. Now that she thought about it, the Jeep, aside from dust built up over the last few months, looked and smelled brand new. If it was brand new, then there wasn't going to be anything useful inside.

Her hopes now lied with the with the sheriff cruiser.

Quietly, she made her way towards the Ford, silently praying for the walkers not to notice her. An intense fire burned in her ankle due to the added stress on her leg from crouching, making it very difficult for her not to scream out in pain. Miraculously, she managed to get behind the Ford without making a noise.

Please be unlocked. Please be unlocked. PLEASE be unlocked.

Astrid gripped the door handle and slowly pulled at it, fearing the worst. Instead, the door quietly swung open, much to her surprise. She slipped into the cruiser, taking note of everything she saw. Most of it was useless to her. There was a police scanner and police laptop installed into the front dashboard, but those were next to useless since it was a mystery if the car's battery was dead or not. The tank indicator wouldn't show if it had any gas in the tank unless she started the engine. Crushing Astrid's hopes further was the fact that the gun rack in-between the front seats was empty.

That figures.

Then again, it might have been better that there was no shotgun or rifle in the rack. She doubted if she could even use it properly with her arm. By now, she could move her left arm again, but she couldn't raise her arm past her chest without having explosions of pain in her shoulder. The recoil from a shotgun or rifle might screw her arm even further.

But there had to be something inside for her to use.

She checked the glove compartment, finding important looking papers with random scribbling on it, a oversized flashlight, some napkins with the diner's logo on it, a small box of bandages, and one of those newer Tasers that vaguely resembled a pistol. She took the flashlight and tucked it in her belt. The flashlight would help her preserve her Zippo for emergencies. The Taser was pretty much useless, unless she was attack by a bandit. Still, she took it and tucked it in the back of her pants. It never hurt to be prepared.

_Fuck it _she eventually decided, unable to decide on a clear cut plan. Every minute she sat there in indecision, strength was leaking out of her body. She needed to get in there as soon as possible and

kill those monsters before she got too weak.

She would rather do this stealthily but sneaking around wasn't an option with her ankle in the shape it was in. Astrid got out of the car, drawing her knife and baton. She'll wing it and improvise as she went along. With a flick of her wrist, the ASP baton swung out with an audible c_click. It didn't matter to her that the walkers heard it. Astrid charged into the diner, or the closest one could get to charging with a limp, the twenty-one inch extended baton in her left and the seven inch KA-BAR utility knife in a reverse grip in her right.

The sheriff turned to face Astrid, allowing her to clearly see him for the first time. Handlebar moustache, square jaw, wide shoulders, muscular arms, empty pearly white eyes, pale waxy skin, tufts of sandy brown hair sticking out from under his hat, and a small ace bandage wrapped around his wrist. In a instant, Astrid figured out what happened. Someone bit the sheriff when he was subduing someone who had turned when he came to the diner only to die, reanimate somehow, and infect the chef and waitress. How exactly that happened, Astrid couldn't say. She had seen many places over the last few months where people had been obviously infected but somehow went unnoticed until they turned. She felt her gut turn inside out but misplaced sympathy was often fatal. Far too many people had perished from misplaced sympathy towards strangers who were infected. She couldn't afford to do that.

The sheriff turned and headed towards her with his armed outstretched. He was a whole head taller then Astrid and at least thirty pounds heavier, but Astrid was smarter and faster. She swung her baton downwards at the sheriff's knees, the tip of the baton connecting with the back of his leg with an loud crack, knocking him down on his knees. She drove the blade into the top of his head, tearing through his ridiculous cowboy hat and digging into his brain. The walker went limp, dropping to the floor and taking Astrid's knife with him.

Goddamn it. I used too much force.

The waitress closed the small distance between the jukebox and the entrance faster then Astrid thought. She quickly switched the baton from her left hand to right, forgoing the knife. There was no way she was going to be able to pull it out quick enough. She raised her baton and swung downward as hard as she could, striking the waitress's temple. Her head snapped back and she toppled to the floor.

Her victory was short-lived however.

The waitress had already began the painstakingly slow task of standing up. Astrid had struck with enough force to rip off a section of her forehead which hung off by a strand of pale skin, revealing the dark flesh and white bone underneath.

Crap.

What could she use? The baton wasn't cutting it. Her knife wasn't an option. The sheriff must have been the only customer at the time because the only thing on the counter were the shattered remains of a ceramic coffee cup. No utensils for her to stab the waitress with and

no plates or up she could use to smash against her skull.

Wait a second.

The flashlight.

It was a Maglite. Maglites were known for being heavy yet durable and bright flashlights. They were also known for being makeshift batons among police officers as they could potentially break bones. Astrid switched the baton back to her left and retrieved the Maglite from her belt. She flipped it over and swung the solid portion at the exposed part of the waitress's skull, shattering the skull and damaging the brain with a satisfying _crunch._

Victory!

The bloodlust soon left Astrid once her body realized she was no longer in any danger, draining her of strength and much needed adrenaline. Pain flooded into every joint in her body, setting her already aching nerves on fire. She needed to get somewhere safe to rest and recuperate.

She placed a boot on the sheriff's head while grabbing the knife stuck in the sheriff's head. Astrid took two deep breaths before pulling back with whatever strength she had left and yanking the black blood stain blade out of his head. No way she was leaving this knife behind. It had helped her through thick and thin. Astrid wasn't in the shape to properly search the waitress or the sheriff, so she took the sheriff's sidearm and his two spare magazines. The side of it was marked "Glock 30 .45 Auto". The brass check revealed the gun wasn't chambered and she left it as is. From what she knew of Glocks from movies, all one had to do was chamber a round and pull the trigger. She discarded the Taser, her confidence restored now that she had a actual firearm tucked in the back of her pants.

She needed to rest, but where could she rest?

The kitchen was ripe with mold and that could easily infect her cuts. The flies in the front would only annoy her to no end, not to mention Astrid wasn't in the mood to sleep the same room as some permanently dead walkers. There was no break room for the staff and the restroom was out of the question entirely. There was also no place for her to safely make a fire nor was there anywhere she could sit without sitting on some form of bacteria.

Where else could she go?

The manager's office.

That might work. Astrid had worked as a waitress at a nearby diner as a summer job once before. Her manager had a couch in his office in case he got into any spats with his wife and needed a place to crash. He extended the same offer to anyone else if they had relationship problems and needed a place to crash for the night. Hopefully whoever had managed the diner before shared a similar mindset. She grabbed the worn knob with her one free hand and twisted it, but it wouldn't budge.

Figures she thought to herself. _Who would leave a door unlocked in the apocalypse?_

To Astrid's relief, it was a older lock, which meant Astrid could pick it. Astrid slipped her knife blade in between the door frame and the locking side of the door, just above where the lock should enter the frame. She angled the blade downwards, hooking the serrated part of her blade onto the bolt. She wiggled the blade back and forth, slowly but surely inching the bolt back. After a few painstaking minutes, Astrid finally was able to push the bolt all the way back and open the door. She entered the office, closing the door with her bad foot since her hands had already cramped up.

The office was everything she had come to expect. Small and cramped with the walls adorned with cheesy pictures of hunting and fishing trips with the manager and his guy buddies, a small desk with a ancient desktop propped up against one wall, corny hunting theme lamps, a mini-fridge stocked with stale and now expired beer, and a tiny two seat couch. Without a second's hesitation, fatigue finally caught up with Astrid, dropping a huge weight on her shoulders, and her knees gave way, causing her to faceplant into the tiny sofa.

Within seconds, relief flooded every corner of her body and she was floating away into a place far better then the crappy excuse for a world she lived in.

* * *

><p>"Night Fury, this is Kamikaze, do you copy?"<p>

The handheld CB radio remained silent in Cameron's hands. She stared at it intensely for approximately seventy two point eight seconds before sending another message with concern heavy in her voice. "Night Fury, this is Kamikaze, please come in. Come on Henry, don't do this to me."

By Eddward's count, that was Cameron's four hundredth and twentieth message she broadcasted since their group had ventured out on their rescue mission. Eddward had also noted that the intervals between each message had drastically decreased as they sluggishly approached Henry's last known coordinates. Cameron had started off with six hundred second intervals, but only a few hours later, she had frantically decreased into one minute intervals.

He couldn't help but worry about Cameron. Maybe it was his friendly and worrywart nature. Maybe it was the fact that Cameron wasn't exactly the most stable of individuals compared to most people their age, being a kleptomaniac and heavily traumatized from the apocalypse. Maybe it was because Cameron was incredibly distressed at the thought of losing one of the only two people left in the world that she considered family. Maybe it was the fact that on Henry's last radio transmission he said that he had kids with him and was trapped in the Cook County Hospital, where many suspected the outbreak originated for the state.

Regardless of whatever reason he may have had, Eddward was legitimately concerned for both Henry and Cameron. Henry had left on a search and rescue mission with several members of their community after receiving a garbled transmission for help on his CB radio while in the midst of a scavenging run. Henry and his group only carried enough supplies to last for a little more then a week. To conserve

ammunition, scavenging teams never carried more than fifty spare rounds per long arm and sidearm, instead relying on stealth and speed to bypass any trouble met along the way.

"You worried about Cameron?" asked Gregory, handing Eddward an Soldier Fuel energy bar to comfort him.

Gregory was a close friend of Cameron and Henry, having arrived together a few months ago in their community. Whatever it was they had experienced out there, it was infinitely worse than what Eddward experienced. Peach Creek was lucky enough to be warned days before the undead hordes reached the county. Eddward did witness many unpleasant and unnerving sights on his exodus out of Peach Creek, but he was surrounded by a large group from his neighborhood and they only stayed on the road for a few weeks before finding a stable community. Gregory only had Henry and Cameron for companions and they wandered around unsupervised for months, relying solely on themselves.

Eddward eventually took the energy bar and pocketed it. "I admit, I am worried. Henry's in a precarious situation and Cameron is losing her mind fretting over Henry and the kids. I want to help Cameron through this, reassure her that we'll get there, but I don't know her all that well and frankly, the odds are against us and Henry."

"Yeah," agreed Gregory, idly picking his nails with his Fallkniven Al Swedish survival knife. It was a Swedish design, with a six point three inch full tang blade and checkered Kraton grip. To see a knife like that was pretty rare and seemed out of place in Gregory's manicured hands. Cameron had no shortage of stories from her time wandering across the state, many of them vivid and exuberant. How Gregory seemed untouched by all that horror was a mystery even Eddward couldn't comprehend. "What is it, five thousand to one?"

"Six thousand seven hundred and thirty two to one," corrected Eddward, factoring in the considerable amount of unknown factors and variables.

They didn't know if Henry or his partner were still alive.

They didn't know how many kids Henry rescued.

They didn't know if the kids had adults with them.

They didn't know if the kids belonged to a larger group.

They didn't know if Henry's attackers were the undead or the living.

They didn't know which section of the hospital Henry had barricaded himself in.

There were just too many unknowns.

But despite all this, Gregory seemed relatively unconcerned about his friend's predicament.

How could Gregory act so nonchalant? Sure, Eddward knew of several

people in their community who acted quiet and nonchalant as a coping mechanism, but he knew for a fact that Gregory wasn't one of them. Gregory was one of the few people that seemed to be left relatively unaffected by the spontaneous rising on the dead and collapse on society. He was a gentlemen in every sense of the word. He carried himself with purpose and always maintained a calm, level-headed composure despite everything crumbling around him. He was respectful to girls their age, many of which who considered him handsome due to his neat dark brown hair that never needed combing and supposedly gentle brown eyes, and he never started fights with the other obnoxious guys their age.

In fact, Eddward couldn't think of a single time that he saw Gregory act up for any reason since he met him four months ago.

"Hurry up back there," barked Jim Morales, interrupting Eddward's train of thought.

It was pretty hard to miss Jim. For one, he was the only adult in their small group. He was a large man, an easy six foot three with hairy muscular arms, a pronounced gut, short spikey brown hair, week old stubble, beady little eyes, and he always wore a bright red zipped up sweatshirt with the sleeves always folded up to his elbows for some inexplicable reason. He was a strict man, often pushing people to surpass their perceived limits yet intelligent in his own right and cautious enough to know where the line was drawn. Eddward had inferred that he had some sort of military experience, which was substantiated by rumors from his ex-students from Kadic Academy, but when asked, he always responded with a curt "I'd rather not talk about it." The signs of Jim's unknown military career and signs of PTSD were painstakingly obvious to Eddward: constantly being alert for danger even when one wasn't present, unreasonable hostile and strict towards others until he established trust, his impulsive actions, the military style drills and training regime he forced himself through every morning despite his ungainly weight, and his "at attention" posture he seemed natural in.

The two of them quickened their pace, not wanting to incur Jim's wrath. He had a reputation for punishing kids for even the most trivial matters. Best not to disappoint.

"Do you know how much farther 'til the hospital? It's getting pretty late," said Gregory, his eyes transfixed on the setting sun. Eddward had to admit, it was a stunning sight. The red-stained sky over the endless bright green top of the forest provided a breathtaking yet peaceful contrast. Shame they didn't to enjoy moments like that too often. "It's not too far but it is a considerable enough distance that we need to take shelter for the night. If memory serves, the hospital is about fifteen kilometers from here."

"Please use American."

"Actually, that name is a misnomer. It is actually called the British system but the British abandoned it years ago when most of Europe converted to the metric system, thus leaving the British system to be called the American system by the rest of the world as only the United States is currently using the outdated system, which-"

"Just tell me how many miles it is," said Gregory in his unusually calm voice. Not a hint of annoyance or malice.

It was, in a word, unsettling.

Eddward quickly did the calculations in his head. A kilometer was .621371 miles long. Fifteen kilometers times .621371 meant it was 9.32057 miles away. "A little more than nine miles," he answered a fraction of a second later.

"It'll take us all night if we keep following this road."

"You do not need to worry. According to the map I studied, there is a diner one point four miles up the road from here. We could stop there for the night."

"If only it was that easy," cryptically mused Greggory, staring off into the distance.

He's a strange one thought Eddward.

* * *

><p>"So just how screwed are we?" asked Henry, flipping his butterfly knife open and closed in eye-catching movements and tricks with little effort. It relaxed him since it was all muscle memory at this point. The repetitive motion and sounds of his knife helped to empty his mind, especially when he was in terrible situations like the one he was currently in.<p>

"Well, the hospital has a emergency water reserve so we have clean running water for a good bit, but foodwise, we could maybe last another forty-eight hours at the most, if we stretch in out enough," stated Patton Drilovsky, stroking his unusually large cleft chin for a sixteen year old, deep in thought. "We've got no electricity nor do we have anything to distract that horde knocking at our doors. There's no underground route we can take, no ambulances or vans for use to drive off in, no emergency helicopter on the roof for us to fly away."

Henry had to admit, their situation was truly terrible. Cook County Hospital was a large hospital and was turned into a refugee center before the National Guard executed everyone inside for being infected or suspected of being infected. Unfortunately, the sounds of gunfire had drew a large herd of the undead and they had noticed Henry and his team entering the hospital. All the entrances were blocked, but the undead had crowded around all the exits as a result.

They were under siege and they were losing badly.

Between what they carried on their persons and what they scavenged from the abandoned hospital wings was less then hopeful. Each of them were supplied with three First Strike Rations taken from a National Guard Base, which contained enough supplies for each of them to last nine days, but they finished those off the day before last since they had to feed the kids they rescued. All they had managed to find in the hospital kitchen was a box of unopened humanitarian daily rations left over from when the hospital became a refugee center.

They were prepared for a scavenging mission, so they packed accordingly. Bolt cutters, wire cutters, miniature flashlights, a small steel crowbar, a lock picking kit, thick gloves, rope, and

spare duffel bags. They didn't bring enough ammunition to deal with the undead horde outside. They managed to find a few bottles of antibiotics and painkillers as well as a handful of bottles of morphine accompanied by a generous amount of syringes, but unless they wanted to overdose or planned on making the undead somehow overdose, the medicine could only help them if injury should befall them.

They definitely were not prepared for this.

"How are we on weapons?"

Patton gestured to the meager amount of weapons laid out on the table. "We have the three machetes we brought with us, your balisong, and the fire axe from that case down the hall for melee weapons. For sidearms, all we have is a Beretta M9 with a single fifteen round magazine and my Colt Single Action Army for which I only brought fifteen extra rounds. Simone's upstairs with the AWP but we can't expect much cover fire from her because she only has twenty rounds left." A sharp crack interrupted their conversation and they tensed up, waiting for a signal.

None came.

"Nineteen rounds," corrected Patton after the monotonous moan of the undead soon took over. "I also have that assault rifle I found on that national guardsman we found down the hall along with his two spare magazines." Patton held up a M4 carbine slung across his shoulder, showing off its various attachments: a collapsible stock, vertical foregrip, underbarrel flashlight, and scope. "Between those three magazines, we have seventy-three rounds for it. Even if we got a perfect headshot with every bullet we currently have, we would only kill about half the crowd outside and the sound would only lure more of those things out here. We can't fight back and we can't run. I don't see any other options."

Henry flashed the stoic Patton a smug grin. "So, pretty screwed I take it?"

* * *

><p>AN: To avoid confusion, every character that I'm using or going to use will be an expy from a cartoon, anime, movie, or tv series because I am lazy and do not want to make likeable, dislikable, and expendable OCs. Takes up more time than I am willing to put in or have to spare. Places mentioned will also be references to shows, video games, movies, and the like and reimagined to work with the scenario I have created and the same applies to the characters. My sister (White Demon, I'm Black Devil in case you haven't read the profile) tells me it is a multi-crossover story, but I don't consider it so because everyone, including the HTTYD crew (who are age-wise in-between the first movie and the second movie), are conforming to the universe I put them in (so some details are twisted to fit such as names, backgrounds, etc.) and the focus is on them, although some characters do get their moments and possess a vital role in the overall story.

I warn you though: anyone can die. My sister got mad at me for killing off several lovable characters from her favorite series when I told her my initial idea for this story.

So, please review and leave constructive criticism if possible. I'm a avid reader and love to write stories in my spare time, but I do need feedback so I can improve my writing skills. Thank you for your time. Hope you like the story.

****Warning: Rated M for graphic violence, strong language, and dark themes spread throughout.****

****Dramatis Personae (for those who might not be able to figure out who's who and/or for those who want a better picture of the characters)****

Note: this applies for the characters present in this particular chapter, future chapters will have longer and shorter character lists with different characters

Astrid Hofferson (pretty obvious)

Cameron (Camicazi from the book version of HTTYD)

Greggory (Thuggory from the book version of HTTYD)

Eddward (Double-D from Ed Edd N Eddy)

Jim Morales (from Code Lyoko)

Patton Drilovsky (Numbuh 60 from Codename Kids Next Door)

Simone (?)

Scott (?)

Freddie (?)

Henry (?)

Thorston Twins (do you really need an explanation?)

End
file.